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The Good Egg

LIFE

A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Doman, Bureau of Home Economics, Mr. E. J. Rowell, Agricultural Marketing Service, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, April, 2, 1940, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 92 associate radio stations.

WALLACE KADDERLY:

Here we are in Washington -- and it looks as though spring really had come -- at least two of your two Department of Agriculture reporters, Ruth Van Doman and E. J. (Mike) Rowell, have loaded the table here -- all around the microphone -- with one of the best-known signs of spring. They have put here eggs in the shell -- eggs out of the shell --- eggs in cartons ---

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

We like to see what we're talking about, Wallace.

KADDERLY:

Like to demonstrate the good egg --- is that it?

E. J. ROWELL:

Eggs - actly, Wallace --- Oh, I'm sorry.

KADDERLY

You better be, --- if you don't want to be egged right out of here, Mike.

VAN DEMAN:

Well, all your punning and funning aside, Wallace these are all good eggs. Wouldn't you say, Mike, we could vouch for every single one?

ROWELL:

Absolutely. They're Government graded.

KADDERLY:

"Nearby white specials."

ROWELL:

The ones in this carton are. They're marked U. S. Grade A. But that corresponds to what the wholesalers call "nearby white specials."

And this lot here, these are generally called "fresh firsts," in the whole-sale trade. In terms of the standards for quality for the retail trade, you see they're labeled Grade B.

KADDERLY:

I was really just thinking out loud in the way we give our egg quotations in the daily "swing of the markets." Giving wholesale prices as we do there, naturally we use the wholesaler's terms.

VAN DEMAN:

Seems as though it would be a lot easier if the wholesale and the retail trade spoke the same language.

(OVER)

ROWELL:

That will probably come. The Government now has a proposed A B C system of grading eggs for use in both the wholesale and retail trade.

VAN DEMAN:

What really concerns me, of course, is the consumer end of this egg business. --- I'm all for anything that helps the buyer of a dozen eggs know what he or she is getting.

And I can testify that my own lot has certainly been a happier one since I found these A B C grades clearly marked on the carton. I've bought eggs by grade now in New York State, and the District of Columbia, and California. --- At least I've taken all these A B C grades labels to mean the same thing.

ROWELL:

That's right. Some 20 States now have standards identical with, or approximately the same as the Federal standards for quality in shell eggs.

Last year somewhere around 40 million dozen eggs were graded and sold with these A B C labels.

VAN DEMAN:

I've noticed the grade labels are put on in different ways in different States.

ROWELL:

Yes - here in the District of Columbia you'll find it as a "certificate of quality," pasted on the carton. That's the Federal Government's way of indicating quality grades on eggs. And Maryland and Virginia follow that same plan, since they send so many eggs into the District.

KADDERLY:

They must have to ship their eggs very promptly after they're laid.

ROWELL:

They do for the top grades. For instance, for an egg to be classed as Grade A, the air cell must not be larger than three-sixteenths of an inch --- when the egg is held up to the light in a candling machine. And the yolk must be fairly well centered. And the white clear and reasonably firm.

VAN DEMAN:

"Reasonably firm" being firm enough to stand up well around the yolk, like this Grade A egg we broke into the saucer here.

KADDERLY:

The kind that makes the perfect poached egg.

VAN DEMAN:

I'm glad to hear you say that, Wallace. That's something not everybody seems to understand. I always think it's a mistake to poach eggs that have weak, watery whites and flattened-out yolks. Eggs like that are so much better scrambled or made into an omelet --- the flat kind of omelet where you don't capitalize on the very firm white --- separate it from the yolk -- and beat air into it. Naturally, a thick viscous egg white holds those air cells best.

KADDERLY:

In other words, Ruth, you think it's a wise cook who chooses her eggs according to the way she's going to serve them.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, provided they're all eggs of good flavor. Personally, I never take a chance on serving an egg of questionable flavor in any way.

ROWELL:

That's one of the main objects of the A B C grading system.

KADDERLY:

You mean, Mike, you can grade the flavor of an egg while it's in the shell, just from looking at it?

ROWELL:

To a pretty large extent, yes. Of course if a hen has helped herself liberally to garlic or onions, her egg may be pretty highly seasoned. But the modern poultry producer watches the diet of his hens a lot more closely than he watches his own diet. And the hen in the big modern egg-producing factory eats just what is set before her. That way the flavor of her eggs is pretty well assured.

KADDERLY:

I realize that the people who candle the eggs and grade them are experts. But even a non-expert, like myself for example, can tell something about the freshness of an egg by looking at the shell.

ROWELL:

That's right. A new-laid egg has a certain bloom --- not shine --- but a dull, almost a chalky look.

VAN DEMAN:

And the color of that shell doesn't have a single thing to do with the food value or the flavor.

ROWELL:

No, notwithstanding that Boston wants its eggs brown, and New York wants its white.

VAN DEMAN:

How about Chicago? ----- it open minded?

ROWELL:

I think so. --- Well, regardless of the color of egg shells, this is a good year for good eggs.

VAN DEMAN:

And a good time of year for good eggs.

ROWELL:

Yes, in spite of the cold snaps, eggs are very plentiful --- and to the consumer the price is favorable.

KADDERLY:

Ruth, aren't you going to put in some words of wisdom here about cooking eggs? --- Didn't you bring along a copy of your egg leaflet? "Eggs at Any Meal" is the title as I remember it.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, that's a hardy perennial. It comes out every spring. Right here it is!

KADDERLY:

Just as a round-up of all this talk about the good egg, , I'd like to offer this leaflet to our listeners --- any of them who don't have it already.

VAN DEMAN:

Delighted of course to have you. The main thing about cooking eggs, no matter how they appear on the table, in shells or out, is to keep the heat moderate. Eggs are practically pure protein, and too much heat makes protein tough and hard.

KADDERLY:

Yes, I know, eggs are no longer hard boiled; they're hard cooked in the best home economics circles.

Well, Farm and Home friends, if any of you want this leaflet on how to cook eggs in the up-to-date way, just drop a card to the Bureau of Home Economics, here in Washington, D. C. All you need to do is write egg leaflet on the post card --- or "Eggs at Any Meal" if you want to use the full title.

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